



# The Role of USAID and Development Assistance in Combating Terrorism

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PHOTO: A displaced person picks up plastic sheeting to construct a shelter in a camp in Darfur. (USAID)

**S**INCE 11 SEPTEMBER 2001, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played an increasingly prominent role in the War on Terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The agency's humanitarian and development assistance programs, especially those directed toward at-risk populations and regions, have been recognized as critical components in the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism and its accompanying National Implementation Plan.<sup>2</sup> These programs can play a crucial role in denying terrorists sanctuary and financing by diminishing the underlying conditions that cause local populations to become vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. Moreover, USAID programs directed at strengthening effective and legitimate governance are recognized as key tools with which to address counterinsurgency.

Historically, USAID supported national security objectives by providing humanitarian assistance and fostering long-term economic and political progress in the developing world. However, as a result of a changing international environment, USAID was increasingly tasked to respond not only to humanitarian crises such as floods and famines, but also to complex emergencies in places like Somalia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and, more recently, to crises in Sudan, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. Government-wide recognition of the importance of development in shoring up states prone to instability and vulnerable to terrorism has led to its designation as the third "D" in the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS).<sup>3</sup> This designation makes development—along with diplomacy and defense—one of the key pillars of national security. The National Security Strategy noted that "development reinforces diplomacy and defense, reducing long-term threats to our national security by helping to build stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies."<sup>4</sup>

## Addressing Risk Factors

This change in doctrine led to internal and external changes at USAID. Internally, a white paper identified instability and conflict—present in many countries where USAID operates—as conditions terrorists seek to exploit. The paper noted the need for short-term, conflict-sensitive programming to stabilize these environments before USAID could implement its long-term, traditional development programs. In 2003, USAID established the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) to lead efforts to better identify the underlying causes of instability, conflict, and extremism and to design programs to ameliorate them.

The 2002 NSS also emphasized a “whole-of-government” approach to the War on Terrorism. Although various USAID offices, such as the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Office of Transition Initiatives, have worked with the Department of Defense (DOD) and other federal agencies to conduct humanitarian assistance, stabilization, and reconstruction operations, the new strategy determined that a more holistic, integrated development-defense-diplomacy approach was required. Recognizing the need for a USAID specific entity to support this integrated interagency approach, USAID established the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) in 2005 to serve as the focal point for interactions between USAID and DOD, to improve USAID’s capacity to work with governmental agencies and other actors in synchronized national-security programming, and to help develop USAID positions on national security issues. The office is staffed by former military officers, Foreign Service officers, and subject-matter specialists.

These internal and external changes have already produced a number of interagency initiatives to thwart terrorism. Some examples include the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) and the newly planned joint counter-extremism projects in the Horn of Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Launched in 2004, TSCTI targets extremism, instability, and violence in the Sahel region of Africa. Supported by USAID’s West Africa Regional Mission and several country missions and embassies, the State Department, USAID, and DOD’s European Command (EUCOM) conducted joint assessments in several Sahelian countries to identify causes of extremism and terrorist recruitment. The assessments identified a number of factors, including remoteness, porous borders, proximity to known terrorist groups, large marginalized and/or disenfranchised populations, and exclusion from political processes, as key causes of instability in the region. Recommendations from the assessments led to targeted interventions in Mali, Niger, and Chad. Examples of such intervention include youth development, former combatant reintegration, education, rural radio and media programs, peace building/conflict management, and small-scale infrastructure projects such as drilling wells and constructing schools. USAID’s TSCTI advisor maintains regular contact with EUCOM regarding the implementation of these programs.

In the Horn of Africa, USAID, the State Department, and the Combined Joint Task Force for Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) are collaborating on a number of counter-extremism projects based on a USAID funded assessment that examined the causes of extremism and identified the most unstable areas in the region. To implement these initiatives, CJTF-HOA is building or rehabilitating essential infrastructure such as schools, clinics, and wells (hardware), while USAID is providing educational and medical training and resources, developing instructional materials, and building institutional capacity (software).

As an illustration, USAID’s East Africa Mission based in Nairobi teamed with CJTF-HOA to rehabilitate 10 clinics and hospitals in the urban and district capitals of Djibouti. CJTF-HOA carried out the physical rehabilitation, and USAID provided health care training to local health care providers. This integrated programming is facilitated by improved interagency communication. Examples of this integration include CJTF-HOA staff regularly participating in USAID project planning meetings and USAID representatives accompanying civil affairs teams in their planning and programming activities.

In addition, OMA and CMM, along with other USAID offices, are developing a Tactical Conflict Assessment Framework (TCAF) for the U.S. military to use in conflict zones. The TCAF, grown out of CMM’s conflict assessment framework methodology, is intended as a practical tool to identify the root causes of conflict in a particular area of responsibility and as a guide to determine what adjustments should be made in the program to resolve those causes. The TCAF will contain both the diagnostic questions that target the local populations’ potential incentives for violence and the detailed directions for military personnel on how to collect answers to these questions. It will also provide illustrative project examples and information on funding sources for possible follow-on interventions, as well as a cultural awareness guide.

The TCAF was initially field-tested in late June 2006 as part of a field training exercise at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This was the first time USAID had trained with U.S. Army civil affairs personnel, and it provided a valuable opportunity to bring development-oriented, conflict-sensitive



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LTC Kevin McGlaughlin, of the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team, speaks to a group of district and provincial leaders in Zabul, Afghanistan, during the opening of a newly renovated health clinic on 30 August 2006. The refurbished clinic is one of nearly 600 clinics being renovated throughout Afghanistan with USAID funding.

approaches into an integrated interagency planning process. Representatives of all offices in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) participated in the exercise. As a result of the exercise's success, we anticipate that USAID and the State Department will participate in future exercises with the U.S. Army.

## Fostering Communication and Understanding

On 29 June 2006, the deputy commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and the assistant administrator of DCHA signed a memorandum of understanding for the exchange of liaison officers between USAID and CENTCOM, the objective being to foster communication and understanding between the two organizations and to strengthen planning and operations through improved coordination.<sup>6</sup> USAID liaison officers, called senior development advisors, will share what USAID has to offer in terms of resources and capabilities for stability operations, conflict/crisis situations, humanitarian assistance, and long-term programs for weak,

fragile states. USAID senior development advisors are already in place at EUCOM and U.S. Southern Command. A senior development advisor has been selected and will soon be posted to U.S. Pacific Command.

Although this level of collaboration is relatively new, it is rapidly moving forward, and many joint interventions, tools, and strategies are being molded into shape. It will take time for joint collaboration to fully develop between the agencies, and surely the relationships will continue to evolve as time progresses and needs change. USAID welcomes these opportunities to partner with relevant government agencies and offices within agencies, such as the State Department's

Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. Together, the agencies will be able to fulfill their mandate in the War on Terrorism and help link development, diplomacy, and defense to create a safer world for everyone. **MR**

*This article is based on research conducted by James Derleth, Senior Strategic Planner and Conflict Specialist, USAID Office of Military Affairs; and Adam Reisman, Conflict Specialist, USAID Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation.*

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### NOTES

1. USAID is similarly engaged with others in the interagency on the issue of counterinsurgency (COIN) and how development is part of the full-spectrum COIN response.
2. White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], September 2006), online at <[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/)>, accessed 18 January 2007; White House, *The National Implementation Plan*, 2006.
3. White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: GPO, September 2002), online at <[www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html)>, accessed 18 January 2007.
4. *Ibid.*
5. GlobalSecurity.org, "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI)," online at <[www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/tscti.htm)>.
6. Field-based interagency discussions have concluded that extremism is a greater threat than terrorism in the Horn of Africa, where internal concerns and conditions are the primary targets of terrorism. Links to the War on Terrorism are tenuous, whereas extremism threatens regional stability.